

# Way to go! Way to give!

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## Holston Conference

## Disaster Response

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**“The kind of work we do, nobody else is going to do.”**

~ Ralph Brock

The people of Holston Conference won't soon forget the springs of 2011 and 2012.

Between March and April 2011, devastating tornadoes slammed through five of Holston's 12 districts. Homes were demolished; 348 people lost their lives across six states. At least five of the dead were Holston church members: one in Glade Spring, Va., one in Cleveland, Tenn., and three in Greeneville, Tenn.

One year later, on March 2, 2012, Holston was again visited by disaster. Storms across the U.S. resulted in 41 tornado-related fatalities. No one died in Holston territory, but in Hamilton County, Tenn., alone, seven people were injured and hundreds of homes were damaged.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) sent grants to Holston Conference to help churches and teams provide aid to their hurting communities through food, supplies, shelter, and labor.

Ralph Brock, retired Army engineer and member of Ooltewah United Methodist Church, was a leader on the Holston Early Response Team sent to help survivors in northern Hamilton County.

“We did debris cleanup, chainsaw work, and helped people salvage their belongings,” said Brock. “We worked on at least 20 properties.”

Putting in 1,789 work hours over several weeks, Brock and his team of 34

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trained volunteers often met homeowners who had lost everything. “We were with them, working with them and listening to their stories,” Brock said.

One man told Brock that after the tornado, he could not reach his wife by telephone or car. He hiked miles over broken trees and mangled terrain to find his house destroyed and flattened. His wife was beneath the wreckage.



Holston Disaster Response Team works clearing storm debris.

“I can only imagine that man’s reaction – how he felt when he popped over that last ridge and saw his house pancaked in the front yard,” Brock said.

The good news is -- Brock calls it a “God moment”-- the woman was saved from the wreckage without injury.

“In most cases, we work with people who are low-income, handicapped, without resources or insurance,” Brock said of Holston’s disaster ministry. “The kind of work we do, nobody else is going to do.”

On March 30, 2014, the United Methodist Church will celebrate One Great Hour of Sharing. The annual offering will support UMCOR’s operational costs, so UMCOR can devote 100 percent of other donations to specified projects such as Typhoon Haiyan or the November tornadoes in the Midwest.

Here in Holston Conference, we give thanks that the gifts you give every Sunday also help people during times of disasters. Your weekly tithes and

offerings not only support UMCOR, they allow Holston to train, equip, and send disaster-response workers all over the world.

Your gifts help us send out volunteers like Ralph Brock, with his chainsaw and listening heart.

“Mission is my passion,” Brock says. “I get more out of it than the people I help.”

Thank you, Holston Conference. You’ll never know how many lives you’ve changed.

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UMCOR workers rush to help after Typhoon Haiyan.



**Holston Conference of The United Methodist Church**  
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